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Question Time: Do you support corporal punishment?

Did your parents use it? Do you use it?

By Rob Burgess

Tribune night editor

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

With the indictment of star Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson for reckless or negligent injury to a child by a Montgomery County, Texas grand jury Sept. 11, the question of corporal punishment has once again entered the public consciousness. Peterson was arrested Sept. 13 and released on \$15,000 bond after he was charged with beating his 4-year-old son May 18 in Spring, Texas.

"Peterson's son had pushed another one of Peterson's children off of a motorbike video game," reported Nick Wright of CBS Houston on Sept. 13. "As punishment, Peterson grabbed a tree branch - which he consistently referred to as a 'switch' - removed the leaves and struck the child repeatedly. The beating allegedly resulted in numerous injuries to the child, including cuts and bruises to the child's back, buttocks, ankles, legs and scrotum, along with defensive wounds to the child's hands."

Initially, Peterson was only suspended for one game, but once the photos from the incident were released, he was suspended indefinitely while legal proceedings continue.

In Indiana, the law surrounding corporal punishment is vaguely worded. Indiana Code 31-34-1-15 states no limit is placed on “the right of a parent, guardian, or custodian of a child to use reasonable corporal punishment when disciplining the child.”

So, we wanted to know: “Do you support corporal punishment? Did your parents use it? Do you use it with your own children? Why or why not? When does it cross the line into child abuse?”

Yes

“I support spankings. My dad always spanked us with a paddle, not beat, three whacks on the butt only. This is exactly what is wrong with today’s children in the world today because parents no longer spank their children without fear of going to jail.” — **Travis Williams**

“Beating and abuse occur when it’s an everyday thing. A spanking, whooping whatever you call it is when the child needs disciplined. I was spanked with whatever was close at times. But it was when I was in trouble. I was not beaten or abused. I have not needed to spank my daughter but will if needed. She has been smacked in the mouth. I would use soap but my wife is dead set against it.” — **Matt Ray**

“I got a swat with the wooden spoon, belt or heaven forbid, a switch off the tree! I grew up just fine. My parents were wonderful parents, I knew they loved me and my family is close to this day. The spankings didn’t happen often but when they did we knew we were wrong. I used to prepare by putting on several layers of clothes.” — **Kellie Ooley**

No

“I don’t support it. I don’t use it. My parents never used it. There are other ways to discipline your child. No, schools do not need it back. If I am not going to use corporal punishment on my kid, no one else is either.” —

Tracey Lapetina

“Many other ways to discipline than violence.” — **Kimberly R. Boseley**

“To each his own. I raised two kids without needing it and they were both great students and had respect for themselves and others. They did not get into trouble yet remained highly social with many friends. The issue in our society is where it crosses over to criminal. A lot of people seem to be confused on the line in the sand.” — **Jay Schlafman**

Depends

“There is the difference between beating and spanking. A child doesn’t need to beat. Spanked is the word and where to spank is what the butt is made for. On other hand, spanking is good and it works with some kids but not all.

Some kids just look at you after spank them. Well, find out how to correct your child.” — **Tammy Gentry**

“I think most of the time, there are better ways to discipline than spanking. Swats on the butt should be used for situations that could cause danger (running into the street, etc.) to make sure you get their attention quickly. I also think that the necessity varies from child to child and how they respond. My oldest couldn’t have cared less about getting spanked. There are good kids that got spanked and good kids who didn’t. I think the most important thing was the love behind the actions of the parents. Maybe that is what’s lacking with unruly kids more than physical punishment.” —

Stephanie Hicks

“There [is] not a certain thing that works that would work for every child. ... You could swat and smack all you want but the kid might just look at you. I believe it’s gone too far people jumping on others parenting. Spanking isn’t abuse. And everyone has their own parenting method. As my daughter gets older I’ll learn my way.” — **Katie Lanae**

Our answers

“I was hit with a belt ... when I messed up as a kid and I learned quickly not to disobey my parents. They were strict, but they didn’t abuse me. There is a fine line. Sometimes, I believe it is necessary to spank your kid if they don’t listen and keep screwing up. I never had any kids, but I had three

stepdaughters and I never once spanked them. Usually, a stern warning and talking to did the trick.” — **Mike Fletcher**

“Corporal punishment is a sticky issue. On the one hand, you’ve got tradition — my own parents practiced corporal punishment in rare instances, and I turned out all right, so the thinking goes. On the other hand, you’ve got concerns over children’s welfare — we’ve all seen or heard of instances where physical “discipline” ruined months or years of a child’s life. The key, I think, is remembering the purpose of corporal punishment is for the child’s long-term well-being. If a parent spansks in anger or without explaining to the child why they’re being punished, it isn’t done with the child’s best in mind and it crosses the line. I don’t have any children, but if and when I do, I figure I’ll practice it only when a serious infraction warrants it -- and never, ever when I’m angry or frustrated.” — **Sarah**

Einselen

“Let’s clear one thing up from the start. It concerns the oft-quoted phrase: ‘Spare the rod, spoil the child.’ Despite popular belief, it does not appear in the Bible. (The phrase actually comes from Samuel Butler’s 17th century satirical poem ‘Hudibras.’) The closest verse to this appears in Proverbs 13:24. ‘He who withholds his rod hates his son,’ reads the verse, ‘but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.’ But if you read the verse in context, you’ll realize Solomon was actually talking about a shepherd’s rod, which is used to guide the sheep, and not a rod used to beat them. Now, to

the question at hand: This is a tricky subject. The problem with corporal punishment is not everyone who uses corporal punishment is a child abuser, but everyone who is actually abusing their children would say they're using corporal punishment. The worst people have once again ruined things for everyone by going overboard. I remember being spanked by my parents, but it was so lightly applied I barely remember it. I don't consider them abusers because of this, but I also don't think it means I have to do it the same way. For the most part, parents in every generation are just doing the best they can with the information available at the time. My son is 11 weeks old now and I have no idea yet what his temperament is going to be as he ages. I hope not to have to use corporal punishment, but if I do I won't employ it on a regular basis or in anger in the heat of the moment. It's a question of logic overcoming emotion. If you're just screaming until you're red-faced, chasing your kids around the house with a tree branch every other day that's abuse whether or not it leaves a mark. You're just being lazy and the only thing your children are learning is that it's OK to use violence every time they lose their temper." - **Rob Burgess**

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